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# A LIBRARY EXHIBIT

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THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

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ASTOR LENOX TILDEN FOUNDATION

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## A LIBRARY EXHIBIT

The American Library Association has requested every library in the country to make an exhibit to illustrate the progress of the fifty years which have passed since the Association was organized. In accordance with this suggestion, the Public Library of the City of Boston has arranged a library exhibit, which was opened in the Exhibition Room of the Special Libraries Department on July 15, and will remain on view until after the Anniversary Conference of the A.L.A. in October. It has been intended to make this showing as comprehensive as possible, in order that both the people of Boston and the many summer visitors to the Library may gain some idea not merely of the methods and resources of one institution but of the library movement as a whole.

As the visitor enters the Exhibition Room, which has been freshly decorated for the occasion, he sees facing him the exhibit made by the Free Public Library Commission of the Commonwealth, of which Mr. Charles F. D. Belden, Director

of the Boston Public Library, is Chairman; this display illustrates both the work of the Commission and some of the methods and achievements of typical public libraries throughout the state. The most significant object exhibited is the map showing all the library buildings of the Commonwealth. It is interesting to note that of the thirty-eight cities and three hundred and seventeen towns in Massachusetts, all but one have public libraries. These institutions contain a combined total of 8,150,000 volumes and have an annual circulation of 21,400,000 volumes. A striking feature of the exhibit is the plaster model of a small public library, made in the office of Coolidge and Carlson. On the wall behind the model is a water-color sketch of the interior of an ideal small library, which shows how homelike and attractive such a place can be made. Interesting graphs are displayed, indicating the relation of library expenditures to other municipal expenses. There are many photographs illustrating the buildings of Massachusetts libraries and some of the methods which they have found most useful.

The right-hand wall as one enters the room is devoted to the American Library Association, of which Mr. Belden is this year President. Here are displayed posters issued by the Association for its fiftieth anniversary, and a selection from

its publications. In a case adjoining are shown other publications of the A.L.A., together with various documents bearing upon the anniversary. An object of special interest is a photograph showing the earthenware model of a Chinese book wagon, recently excavated from a grave one thousand years old, and presented by the Chinese Library Association to the American Library Association, in recognition of its aid to Chinese libraries.

The rest of the room is given up to the exhibit of the Boston Public Library. On one wall hangs an imposing series of photographs showing interior and exterior views of all the buildings occupied by the Library's thirty-one branches. On a table nearby is a delightful model of the West Roxbury Branch Library, the work of Miss Hilda M. Baker, of the Library staff, showing not only the beautiful exterior of the building but all the secrets of its "insides", with wonderful little wax figures sitting at the tables, and carrying on the work of the library. Another case is filled with rare books belonging to the Branches, many of them having some special connection with the neighborhoods served by the libraries. Of special interest is a file of the *Harbinger*, the paper published at Brook Farm, in the West Roxbury district. In this case are also the Bunker Hill medal given to the Charlestown Branch Library, and the Dante

medal presented to Miss Mary F. Curley of the North End Branch in recognition of the Library's service to Italians.

The presentation of the work of the branch system is continued in a series of great leaves hung on a standard in a corner of the room and entitled "The Open Book of the Branches." By turning these leaves one can trace all the leading activities of the branch libraries, including their organization and routine work, their services to the public, and some of the means taken to conserve library material and make it go as far as possible.

The next section is devoted to library work with children. In the wall-cases, stress is laid on the story hour; a special feature is a collection of unusual colored drawings made by school children under the inspiration of Mrs. Cronan's stories. In table-cases nearby is displayed a series of typical children's books, illustrating the development in taste and in book-making during the past fifty years. Among the books shown are many illustrated by famous artists.

The adjoining portion of the wall is occupied by a selection of rare and beautiful books, chosen from the various special collections belonging to the library. Here are shown some important Shakespearian items, drawn from the Barton collection; beautifully illuminated manu-

scripts, including a great volume of anti-phons with music, written in huge letters on sheets of vellum; a copy of Sir Isaac Newton's "Optics", with sixteen pages of manuscript in his own hand; one of the mathematical volumes laboriously copied by the hand of Nathaniel Bowditch, when he was unable to buy the book; a play in the handwriting of Lope de Vega, from the Ticknor collection; books in fine bindings, and many other interesting items.

The adjoining case contains a number of manuscripts from the collection formed by Hon. Mellen Chamberlain, librarian from 1878 to 1890; they include autographs of Ferdinand and Isabella, Sir Henry Vane, Myles Standish and John Alden, Hancock, Washington, Samuel and John Adams, Jefferson, and Daniel Webster; here also is the original pen-and-ink plan of the Boston Massacre made by Paul Revere and used at the trial of the British soldiers.

Other cases contain photographs of the successive librarians of the Library, views of the building in Boylston Street which was the home of the Library fifty years ago, and of various rooms in the present building which are not open to the public; samples of the work of the printing and binding departments; and a series of the important catalogues and other publications of the library. In one corner of the room is a large case with

exhibits illustrating the varied activities of the Divisions of Fine Arts and Technology.

The central case is devoted to exhibiting a few of the books purchased with the income from funds which have been given to the Library by generous and public-spirited donors; without such funds the Library would have been unable to secure these valuable works. Among the most interesting books shown are the beautifully illuminated Dutch manuscript of St. Augustine's "City of God"; a leaf of the Gutenberg 42-line Bible, the first book printed with movable types; the famous Kelmscott Chaucer, printed by William Morris; a horn-book used by eighteenth century children in learning their letters; and a manuscript volume of the accounts kept at the Watertown Arsenal during the early days of the Revolution, open at a page on which are recorded the purchase of horses for the use of General Washington and John Hancock.

The exhibition contains a variety of material of deep interest to the public. No one who visits it will come away without a larger knowledge of the work of the Boston Public Library and a quickened intelligence regarding the library movement which has made such strides in the past fifty years.

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